**Missouri Assistive Technology Council**

**8 September 2023**

**Jefferson City**

**1. Call to Order**

A. Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM by Chairperson Chad Rohr. Members in attendance: Camille Anderson-Weddle,Sarah Becker, Chip Hailey, Emily Hartley, Beth Dauber, Paula Darr, Pam Arbeiter, Aaron Luna, Shari LaRoussa, Lisa Meisenheimer, and Rachel Baskerville. Staff in attendance: Brenda Whitlock, Stacy Brady, Scout Merry, Kara Adams and David Baker. Guests: Angelina Alpert, Kristin Funk, and Jennifer Boedeker.

B. Approval of September Agenda

By unanimous voice vote, the agenda for the September meeting was approved (Motion: LaRoussa; Second: Arbeiter).

C. Approval of June Minutes

The minutes of the June meeting were approved by unanimous voice vote (Motion: LaRoussa; Second: Hailey)

**2. Directors Report**

A. Council Update

1. Results of Executive Board Election

Changes to the Executive Board have occurred as a result of the election held in August. Chad Rohr has transitioned to chairperson. Chip Hailey is now the chair-elect and Emily Hartley has moved to past chairperson. In addition, Rachel Baskerville was elected to the Executive Board as a consumer representative and Samantha Marsicovetere as an agency representative.

With the expiration of their terms, Andrew Lackey and Shelly Summers both moved off of the Executive Board. Their attendance, contributions and insights were greatly appreciated.

The full composition of the Executive Board for the next year is as follows:

* Chairperson - Chad Rohr
* Chairperson Elect - Chip Hailey
* Past Chairperson - Emily Hartley
* Agency Representatives - Beth Dauber and Samantha Marsicovetere
* Consumer Representatives - Lisa Meinsheimer and Rachel Baskerville

2. Membership Update

Word was received from the Boards and Commissions Office that they are taking the necessary steps to finalize the appointment of both Tobi Albrecht and Jennifer Boedeker, both as consumer representatives. In addition, at least one additional consumer representative has submitted their materials and is awaiting action by the Boards and Commissions Office. When official, the appointment of Tobi and Jennifer will reduce the number of open consumer slots on the Council from four to two.

Two agency representative positions will need to be filled: Vocational Rehabilitation and Department of Mental Health/Division of Developmental Disabilities. Efforts to have both agencies identify replacements are underway.

3. Special Announcement

In honor for her time and work as Chair of the Missouri Assistive Technology Council, Emily Hartley was presented a plaque of appreciation.

B. Administrative Issues

1. Public Service Commission Relay Fund Consideration

In early August, MoAT received correspondence from John Van Eschen, Manager of Telecommunications with the PSC that included an issuance to file that asks the PSC to open a case regarding the Relay Missouri Fund and the surcharge rate. The request to review the surcharge rate is standard operating procedure since by state statute it has to be reviewed every two years and adjusted accordingly (it is currently $.10 per line). In reference to the Relay Missouri Fund itself, the correspondence questioned the logic of even continuing the Relay Missouri Fund, with the primary argument being that its usage has declined over the years. If action was taken that eliminated the Relay Missouri Fund, it would result in Missourians with disabilities losing both the Relay Service and the Telecommunications Access Programs since both are funded by the Relay Surcharge. Furthermore, if the Relay Missouri Fund was to be eliminated, it potentially would be a violation of the Americans With Disabilities Act. In the correspondence (a copy of which was included in the member packet), five options for the PSC to consider were laid out including maintaining the status quo, an option to eliminate the Relay Fund on 10/31/2025, and an option to eliminate the Relay Fund on 9/1/2024.

Missouri Assistive Technology provided public input on this matter advocating for maintenance of the status quo (a copy of the letter was also in the member packet).

This proposal is very concerning at this time and will be monitored as it develops.

2. Annual Report

Preparation of the annual report for state fiscal year 2023 is underway and a rough draft will be shared at the December meeting. An effort is being made to shift the annual report from its traditional overview of programs and numbers to more of a format that will emphasize the impact MoAT programs and services have had over the past year. The annual report is distributed to elected officials, state agencies, partner organizations, other Tech Act Programs, and also distributed during public awareness events.

3. Federal Data Report

With the end of the federal fiscal year at the end of September, attention is being shifted to gathering data and preparing the federally required annual performance report, which is due by the end of December. The data from all 56 Tech Act Programs is gathered, presented to Congress and is used as part of the funding process each year.

3. Annual Letter to the Governor

As per state statute, the Council is required to submit an annual letter to the governor each December outlining its accomplishments and intentions for the upcoming year. A rough draft will be presented at the December meeting. In the interim, members were encouraged to share ideas about items undertaken by MoAT this past year that were noteworthy and should be highlighted in the report.

**3. Staff Reports**

A. Current Initiatives

1. Mo Goes Tech Grant

KC Digital Drive, a non-profit in the Kansas City area dedicated to closing the digital divide through programs and services, awarded three micro-grants to MoAT to help individuals learn basic computer skills. Brenda, who was responsible for applying for and executing this opportunity, provided an overview of the initiative. Training was held in three locations: Odessa, Nevada and St. Joseph with each training being multiple sessions covering a variety of basic computer and internet skills such as setting up an email, digital safety and applying for the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). MoAT is the first organization KC Digital Drive has worked with that focuses on individuals with disabilities.

2. Digital Inclusion Project

As part of the cooperative effort with the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council (MODDC) to close the digital divide for individuals with I/DD, the first two Digital Day events were held in the St. Louis and Kansas City areas and a third is scheduled to be held in Springfield at the end of September. Digital Days are intended to connect individuals with I/DD and their family members with information and resources on digital literacy, digital safety, assistive technology and the Affordable Connectivity Program. Outreach to County Developmental Disabilities Boards and to Targeted Case Managers has also occurred as part of an effort to expand Digital Day across the state.

3. e-NABLE 3D Printing Project

Scout highlighted his involvement with e-NABLE on a 3D printing project. e-NABLE is a volunteer organization known for the creation of 3-D printed prosthetics. Wishing to shift their focus a bit, they are interested in partnering with Tech Act Programs and reached out to Scout about partnering to develop a simple kit of 3D printed aids for daily living.

4. PDF Remediation Series

Eileen spoke about the upcoming PDF remediation series being offered as part of the “Let’s Talk ICT” webinar series. Remediating inaccessible PDFs is an area of focus within state agencies. Over the course of several webinars, a panel of experts will dig into the subject of PDF remediation and walk individuals step-by-step through the process. Remediating inaccessible PDF files is one of the more complicated areas of ICT accessibility. The first webinar is scheduled for later this month and has already maxed out its capacity with 100 registered individuals.

5. MoAT Website Redesign

Also shared by Eileen was information about the redesign of MoAT’s website. The redesign will give staff more control over making changes, improve the look of the site, and allow for more timely addition of content. Late October is the hoped for “go live” date.

6. Kids AT Funding

The Kids Assistive Technology Program has received an additional $37,000 for this current federal fiscal year, that ends at the end of September, and also received notification that it will be funded for $100,000 for the upcoming federal fiscal year (October 1, 2023 - September 20, 2024). Funds for the program are provided through the Bureau of Special Health Care Needs.

7. AT Reimbursement 2023-24 School Year

Kara announced that The Assistive Technology Reimbursement Program is open for the 2023-2024 school year and applications are coming in daily with nearly 100 being received thus far. This program helps school districts offset the cost of purchasing assistive technology for students who have it in their education plan. Also of note is that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education increased the amount of funds available for this current school year.

8. Master Plan on Aging

In January, Governor Parson signed Executive Order 23-01 to establish a Master Plan on Aging designed to address a variety of issues being faced by Missouri’s aging and disability population. The Master Plan for Aging will result in a cross-sector, state-led strategic resource to help transform the infrastructure and coordination of services for our rapidly aging population.

Missouri Assistive Technology was asked to be on the Housing and Aging-In Place committee, which was further subdivided into work groups and we ended up on the Universal Design and Aging in Place work group. The work group has narrowed its focus down to two core issues: how to increase the amount of universally designed housing and how to define universal design. Most often, universal design is thought of in terms of housing or buildings, but the work group is hoping that Missouri will define its own vision that will include housing, the wider community and recognize the role that technology, in particular assistive technology plays, in making the world universally designed.

9. Training and Outreach Activities

Staff continue to be extremely busy with multiple invitations to present training and provide outreach activities on issues around assistive technology. The MACDDS conference, MA4 conference, ATIA and Tiered Supports Summit - as well as events mentioned previously - are a few of activities staff have or will be participating in.

10. Power Up 2024

Power Up 2024 planning has begun in earnest. Identification of the location and dates is underway and Requests for Proposals have been sent to hotels in Columbia, at the lake, Springfield and St. Charles. The date and location will be announced soon.

B. Partner Update

1. AEM Cohort - Kristin Funk / Office of Special Education

Kristin Funk with the Office of Special Education provided a partner update on the Accessible Educational Materials Cohort that Missouri has been participating in after being awarded a 4-year technical assistance grant from the Accessible Materials Technical Assistance Center.

Accessible Educational Materials (AEM) refers to both print and technology-based materials used in schools and ensuring that they are designed or enhanced in a manner that makes them accessible to all students and are provided to students in a timely manner.

Kristin explained the history of the technical assistance grant, its goals, activities underway across the state to increase access to and acquisition of accessible educational materials and how Missouri hopes to keep a focus on sustaining attention to this issue once the technical assistance grant is over.

C. AT Spotlight

1. Getting to Know You…with AAC

Augmentative Communication device requests are consistently the largest device category funded by the ATR Program and TouchChat is the most often requested AAC system. Kara led participants through a communication exercise utilizing the TouchChat software. Giving people exposure to how an AAC program works and some of the challenges users face when learning a program were some of the issues explored through the exercise.

D. Program Data and Updates

1. Demonstration and Recycling

No report. Federal FY’24 contracts were discussed separately.

2. TAP for Telephone and Wireless

Re-establishing a consumer support provider in the Rolla area, program marketing activities, and offering individuals with disabilities who already have a phone but need some type of disability related app an opportunity to receive the appropriate app through the program were all TAP highlights shared by Stacy.

3. TAP for Internet/DeafBlind Equipment Program

Brenda noted that she’s seeing the results of the various outreach efforts paying off with new applications to the TAP-I and Deaf/Blind Equipment Program.

4. ATR and ETC

ATR update mentioned above. No ETC update.

5. Show-Me Loans / KAT / MFP

Eileen mentioned the assistive technology focused presentation she is providing to the Show Me Home contractors as part of an effort to get them to increase their thinking and accessing of assistive technology as part of an individual’s transition process.

**3. Action Items**

1. Approval of Demonstration and Reuse Contracts for 23-24

Prior to the start of each fiscal year, which begins on October 1st, the contracts for the demonstration and reuse centers MoAT supports around the state are reviewed, adjusted and approved by the Council. A table that outlined the proposed goals for the upcoming year and amounts to be awarded was shared in advance.

There are currently 9 reuse locations, all of which did extremely well this past year. The staff recommendation is to maintain all 9 locations and provide increases to those who significantly surpassed their yearly goal. In addition, staff proposed switching Access II in Gallatin from a demonstration center to a reuse center since reuse is where a lot of their efforts have been focused over the past couple of years, bringing the total number of reuse centers to 10. In all, staff is recommending that $93,000 in federal funds be devoted to supporting the reuse centers.

This past year, MoAT supported 11 demonstration centers around the state. The switch of Access II to a demonstration center combined with Missouri State University and Rural Advocates for Independence no longer being interested in being a demonstration center will reduce the proposed number this year to 8 demonstration centers. Thus, staff are recommending that $20,000 in federal funds be devoted to supporting the demonstration centers.

The Executive Board supported and advanced to the Council a recommendation that the demo and reuse centers be approved as presented for the upcoming federal fiscal year and that MoAT commit

$113,000 of federal funds to 10 reuse and 8 demonstration centers. By unanimous voice vote (Luna abstained), the Council approved Executive Boards recommendation (Motion: LaRoussa; Second: Hailey)

**4. New Business**

None

**5. Announcements**

Next meeting - Friday, December 8 - Virtual

**6. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 AM by unanimous voice vote (Motion: LaRoussa; Second: Dauber).